



Livelihood-management: Lessons from Bhagavad Gita

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Introduction

In today's volatile business environment, being effective is the hallmark of a good manager. An effective manager must achieve such a level of excellence and effectiveness that it sets him apart from those whom he is managing. The Bhagavad Gita has 700 verses (Slokas) written in 18 chapters talks not just about the spiritual enlightenment but teach us on all the managerial techniques that can be applied by the managers like leadership, motivation, quality in work, goal setting, decision making, and planning.

The Bhagavad Gita was delivered in the battlefield Kurukshetra by Lord Sri Krishna to Arjuna as a counselling to do his duties, to boost Arjuna's declining morale, motivation and to take the Arjuna out of the intra-personal conflict. Arjuna got mentally depressed when he saw his relatives with whom he has to fight. Bhagavad Gita has got all the management tactics to achieve the mental equilibrium and to overcome any crisis situation.

Management is a systematic way of doing all activities. It resolves situations of scarcities be they in the physical, technical or human fields through maximum utilization with the minimum available processes to achieve the goal. The lack of management will cause mental disorder, wastage, destruction, anxiety and even depression.

The greatest confusion that is prevalent in people's minds is whether lessons from Gita are truly applicable to today's life or it is simply meant for chanting. The Bhagavad Gita can be experienced as a powerful catalyst for transformation. It prescribes ways to manage one's own self in the organization and guides on the paths through which one can enhance self-knowledge as well as divine inner peace.

'Albert Einstein' has stated When he read the Bhagavad-Gita and reflect about how God created this universe everything else seems so superfluous.

'Dr. Garry Gelad' said Gita is a work to be treasured. No one of whatever faith or philosophical persuasion who reads this book with an open mind can fail to be moved and impressed.

Bhagavad Gita highlights on various *ways to avoid negative thinking, right knowledge, selfless, faithful, high consciousness, learn & live, detachment from materialistic pleasure, goodness, and so on.* These things are very important not only to maintain mental health constantly but also to



improve mental health. The present study aims at identifying the principles of livelihood-management for overall wellbeing by identifying strategies to prevent depressive thoughts and improve mental health.

Management is required in all aspects of life and social being in the society. For management there has been a rigorous study for improving the businesses, the individual and the society as a whole. But when there's a comparison between the approaches used in the past by our ancestors and the approaches used in the present day does not differ much. The past has been forgotten by many but still remains the essence of it in our day to day life. The study is to find how those past practices were impactful in those times and still are, knowing that those practices might even succeed the present ones in terms of effectiveness.

Every culture around the world had different school of thoughts in management, the most efficient has never been evaluated. The Bhagavad Gita one of the major preacher to the Indian society is being read and the practices mentioned in the spiritual book are in play in the day to day life of an Indian but has yet been forgotten by the individuals in the country. Making India one of the best country in the management studies area is due to the practice of thoughts from the Bhagavad Gita and the reason behind the lacking is that though Indians are practicing the thoughts but not preaching the ideas and where such ideas had come from. The society is on the track towards the western school of management which has developed not very late back. The shift is good for the change but the success is termed when individuals find the gap in the old thought of management and fill the gap with the new modern ways from the western thought rather than revamping the whole though from Bhagavad Gita to western one.

Review of Literature

Last three decades have seen deep interest by management thinkers, scholars and researchers to draw lessons of management from Gita. **S. K. Chakraborty (1987)**, in his book **Managerial effectiveness and Quality of work life** provides an entirely new perception to the concept of managerial effectiveness. He has propounded the S-R-T model of *guna* dynamics and has prescribed various exercises to improve levels of *Sattvic guna* for a better mind. The author further emphasizes that educating organizations on the *Doctrine of Karma* will help in preventing unethical decision making and behaviour in organizations. **Swami Bodhananda (1994)** in his book titled **Gita and the Management** explains that the term happiness is a spiritual value and is not dependent on material conditions. According to him, self-control, restraint, self-abidance,



toleration, and selfless work make one happy. It is this happiness which promotes material prosperity, leading to inner harmony and creative living. **Easwaran (1997)** highlighted there is no significant problem in life which cannot be referred to the Bhagavad Gita for a perfect solution. **Sharma (1999)** asserted that with the slow yet increasing popularity of the Bhagavad Gita towards addressing organizational problems in recent years, there has been a growing interest among management researchers in exploring the concept of Karma Yoga. **Dr. M.B Athreya (2006)** in his article titled **Bringing back values in management** stressed about values based management as a good recipe for long-term success of corporates. Elaborating on the essence of the teachings of our ancient scriptures, Dr Athreya said that companies cannot succeed on the strength of competence alone; they must focus on values and leadership development. **Jeste & Vahia (2008)** said that in Bhagavad Gita (literally meaning “The Song of God), through examples and analogies, Krishna enlightens the disillusioned and enfeebled Arjuna, who is consumed by pre-battle remorse on the prospects of warring against his evil cousins and relatives, the nature and supremacy of duty as well as several philosophical tenets for everyday living . Thus the Bhagavad Gita is not just a concise description of Hindu philosophy, but also a compass to a meaningful life. **Verma and Singh (2014)** suggested that the understanding of the principles of the Bhagavad Gita and its application in day to day life as an effective tool for management and coping of stress. **Ashtankar (2016)** suggested that the teachings of "Bhagavad Gita" can transform a person. Bhagavad Gita teaches about "Mind Control". De-motivated mind makes a person depressed one & a motivated one makes a person cheerful. **Pattabhiram et al. (2017)** explore the divine principles in Bhagavad Gita for its application to mind management & development of human capital.

These insights have opened new windows and doors for further research and application of these ideas in day to day management in the context of new challenges of decision making, stress management, wellbeing, sustainability and livelihood-management.

Methodology

The present study is a qualitative theoretical paper which involves a review of literature on mental health and livelihood-management in context of development of human capital. It focuses on identifying and highlighting the principles for livelihood management that are embedded in Bhagavad Gita.

The Need of Gita for Management



Today's human life is very much busy, with its hectic work pressure, all kind relations getting stressed with too much violence, and corruption. The primary reason for the failure of organizations despite using best practices and pioneering business models, has been lack of display of effective direction by the managers of these organizations. The lack of effective livelihood-management along with the uncertainties and volatilities of modern business world has left managers with dilemmas of how to manage their teams in best possible manner. This is where the Indian paradigm of spirituality comes into the effect through the timeless wisdom of The Bhagavad Gita. When Arjuna was faced with the dilemma of whether to kill his relatives and friends in the Kurukshetra war, Lord Krishna preached him The Gita to pursue him to perform his duties.

Sri Krishna gave not only spiritual enlightenment to Arjuna but also the art of livelihood-management, stress & conflict management, leadership, motivation, and many more aspects of management that can be used even today to increase managerial effectiveness. The teachings and insights of Geeta which are years old hold significance in the management practices of corporates even today.

The three **principles** which have been emphasized by the Bhagavad Gita are...

- 1) The management of mind
- 2) The management of duty and
- 3) The principles of livelihood-management

The principles propounded therein, seem to have universal application and useful for all human beings to mould their character and strengthen themselves to develop their managerial effectiveness. Bhagavad Gita is increasing in mind management and reducing mental and physical illnesses is an important stimulus of human growth and creativity as well an inevitable part of life.

Bhagavad Gita and Livelihood-management

The potential of the human mind is unlimited. It is limited only by, our individual beliefs or disbelief as to whether we can accomplish a thing or not. According to Bhagavad "the mind acts like an enemy for those who do not control it". The mind is like a child; a child is attracted to everything. Arjun says,

"Mind is very restless, forceful and strong, O Krishna, it is more difficult to control the mind than to control the wind". (B.G.6.34)

It is certainly worthwhile knowing how to control the mind. Lord Krishna says,



“O mighty-armed son of Kunti (Arjuna), it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by constant practice and by detachment”. (B.G.6.35)

In a similar way the intelligence and the spiritual being that we are, must control the mind. The mind is attracted to so many material things. No matter how much we get, we're dissatisfied. So the mind must be disciplined and by practice we must learn to pull it away (detachment) from those things that are not good for it.

Managers should use their intelligence to control the mind, they should not let the mind to be controlled by the senses. Lord Krishna said in the Gita if one's mind is in one's control and he/she can concentrate deeply on one's work, then that person can do wonders at work.

Another teaching of Gita is to do one's work for the sake of work only without caring for the fruit arising out of that work.

"Lord Sri Krishna said: You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty." (B.G.2.47)

That simply means to get deeply involved in one's work or to just think single minded about performing the best in one's job without thinking about the results arising out of those actions performed while doing one's work or duty.

So by following the teachings of "Bhagavad Gita" one is certainly going to excel in job & life.

Lessons from Bhagavad Gita for Livelihood-management

The verses of Bhagavad Gita are powerful spiritual tools for restoring Arjuna's self-confidence. Like Arjuna, we can also benefit from these timeless teachings in quest for self-confidence and self-determination. The following lessons derived from Bhagavad Gita are very useful for an individual to keep his/her mind healthy for happy life -

- 1. SELF CONTROL** - An uncontrolled mind is very weak and unstable; as a result even a small obstacle coming in its way may make it lose initiative. Sri Krishna mentioned that - *“One who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends, but for one who has failed to control their mind, the mind will be the greatest enemy”.* (B.G.6.6)
- 2. BE YOURSELF** - find out your temperament and act in line with it.

“It is far better to discharge one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous.” (Swadhrama- B.G.3.35)



The Gita teaches us that we have a duty to follow our own paths.

3. DETACHMENT - Perform duties without attachments & insistence on particular results.

Accept the results gracefully, gratefully. (*Karmanyevadhikarste- B.G.2.47*)

- Have no attachment when doing your duties
- Focus on your journey, not the goal
- Allow yourself to accept the outcome without any specific results

I teach because I love to. I feel like it is my dharma. I have no expectations when I do, only to spread the knowledge. Knowing I can serve others helps me get through my struggles.

4. MODERATE LIFE - Nothing in excess. Follow the moderation-yoga, moderation food, sleep, speech, exercise, and meditation eliminate stress. (*Yuktaaharaviharsya- B.G.6.17*)

It is integral we connect with other people but don't make it an obligation. Moderate who you give your time to. Create a schedule to see where your time goes.

5. PRACTICE MEDITATION - The Gita tells us to dedicate time to breathing. Close your eyes and focus on your breath as to control your attention. (*apnejuhvatipranam- B.G.4*)

The Gita teaches:

“The practice of meditation frees one from all affliction. This is the path of yoga. Follow it with determination and sustained enthusiasm. Renouncing wholeheartedly all selfish desires and expectations, use your will to control the senses. Little by little, through patience and repeated effort, the mind will become still in the Self”.

6. NEVER GIVE UP - The greatest power that resides in this world lies in YOU. A famous quote said by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita: *“If you don't want to fight for what you want, and then don't cry for what you lost”.*

7. FAITH AS A PATH TOWARDS STRENGTH - Faith in the Higher Reality is a great source of strength. A man is what his faith is. As the faith so will be our desires, thoughts and action. (*Shraddhamayoyam purushah. Yo yat shraddhah sa eva saha- B.G.17*)

The lessons from the book are a lot in terms with the lessons that the management thought preaches and are being taught in schools and universities. The management taught by the western world is modern and the one that the Indian society is following since ages is from those Vedic times India was blessed upon to have. Looking at the practices of the citizens of India in day to day life, it can be observed the aforementioned lessons are ingrained in the individuals. Such lessons are important part of Indian life, these lead the way to the success.



Summary & Conclusion

Arjun is a great warrior who had been diagnosed with depression having symptoms of sorrow, anxiety, nervousness, confusion, negative thoughts. Arjuna has become depressed and did not want to participate in Mahabharata, he is very anxious about the possibility of the destruction that comes to family and society in the aftermath of war.

Bhagavad Gita can be observed as a powerful catalyst of transformation. Bhagavad Gita teaches about "Self Control". If one's mind is in one's control & he/she can concentrate deeply on one's work, then that person can do wonders at work. The researcher has tried best to provide valuable information related to livelihood-management covered by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita. Lord Krishna says "Whatever has happened, has happened for good. Whatever is happening, is happening for good. Whatever will happen, shall also happen for good. You came empty handed and will go empty-handed". For better mental health, it is good to follow the direction of the inner voice because everything is within us. There is an urgent need to teach Bhagavad Gita at schools and colleges to prepare better citizens and for better livelihood management.

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